

THE INSPECTION OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

GUIDANCE ON THE INSPECTION PROCESS

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GLOSSARY OF THE TERMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

Pre-school centre	Nursery schools and classes in the statutory sector, and voluntary and private pre-school provision funded by the Department of Education (DE).
Nursery unit	One or more nursery classes under the management of a primary school.
Leader	The head of the organisation; for example, the principal, the teacher, the leader or the proprietor
Staff	The persons who work with the children to promote learning, including teachers, assistants and staff in playgroups or day nurseries.
Management group	The board of governors, management committee, board of directors, Proprietor or others responsible for the pre-school centre.
Employing authority	The organisation which employs the staff and is responsible for all aspects of employment.
Inspection team	Two or three Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspectors or an ETI inspector accompanied by an associate assessor (AA).
Early Years Specialist (EYS)	Early years specialist, employed by the Early Years Organisation (EYO), qualified teacher or independent.
CCMS	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT?

The guidance in this document provides details of the revised procedures for pre-school inspections. The guidance is intended for all forms of pre-school educational provision including nursery schools and classes, and voluntary and private pre-school centres. In order to keep the guidance concise, some standard terms are used and these are explained in the glossary.

2. WHAT TYPES OF INSPECTION WILL BE USED IN PRE-SCHOOL CENTRES?

In order to take account of the different stages of development of pre-school centres, different types of inspection will be used.

Baseline inspection visit

All new pre-school settings receive a baseline inspection visit from the district inspector. During this visit, the setting's work is evaluated and the district inspector spends time with the staff, providing feedback on the current quality of provision, strengths and key areas for improvement.

Inspection

Scheduled inspections are carried out in a cycle. Most pre-school inspections are completed in one day with the exception of nursery units that are integrated into the primary school inspection. A published report is produced after every inspection. The report is made available to parents and the wider community through the ETI web-site, www.etini.gov.uk.

Follow-up Inspection

A follow-up inspection is conducted in organisations which require urgent and significant improvement. Typically, evidence is gathered over one or two days and there is an oral report back at the end of the inspection.

3. HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE ABOUT WHICH TYPE OF INSPECTION IS USED?

The following indicators make it clear when particular types of inspection will normally be used.

Pre-school inspection	<p>One day inspection, for discrete pre-school inspections.</p> <p>Typically, evidence is gathered and there is an oral report back at the end of the first day.</p> <p>A pre-school inspection evaluates the quality of provision across the range of activities.</p> <p>The inspection focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the quality of the children's development and learning across the six areas of the pre-school curriculum;• the pre-school programme, including the quality of the teaching, planning and assessment;• pastoral care and safeguarding; and• leadership and management. <p>An integrated primary/pre-school inspection model is used when a nursery unit/reception group is inspected as part of a primary school inspection.</p>
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Follow-up inspection	<p>Usually one or two day inspection.</p> <p>Typically, evidence is gathered over one or two days and there is an oral report back at the end of the inspection.</p> <p>A follow-up inspection is conducted in organisations which are less than good and have important or significant areas for improvement requiring urgent attention. In the case of reception provision that is evaluated as less than good, it will be followed-up and reported on during the primary school follow-up inspection; otherwise ETI will monitor progress on addressing the areas for improvement.</p>
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4. WHAT PAPERWORK NEEDS TO BE AVAILABLE FOR AN INSPECTION?

The documents listed below are provided for guidance only and to make clear the procedures used on inspection and the type of information that is needed. The aim is to assist leaders and staff to plan ahead for inspection, you may wish, to refer to the documents to check what information is held within the centre. **There is no requirement for staff to prepare materials solely for an inspection.**

During an inspection, the leader should make available to the reporting inspector the written materials that are already to hand and may wish to give some information verbally.

The following useful documents are available on the ETI website: www.eti.gov.uk :

- Information needed for an inspection.
- Child protection / safeguarding pro-forma.
- Child protection / safeguarding pro-forma with prompts.
- Sample of the letter notifying centres of an inspection.
- Sample of the questionnaire for parents.
- Samples of the leaflets and questionnaire for staff.
- What happens after an inspection
- Complaints procedure

If you do not have access to the internet, copies of the documents are available from the address below.

Inspection Services Branch
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Bangor
County Down
BT19 7PR

Phone: 028 9127 9726
Fax: 028 9127 9691
E-mail: eti@education-ni.gov.uk

5. WHAT WILL THE INSPECTORS DO DURING AN INSPECTION?

The inspection team will need to see a range of the activities provided for pre-school children. It is particularly useful if a timetable, or outline of the activities, is available. The inspection team will not expect to see any particular methods or types of activities. The educational provision as a whole should be in line with all statutory requirements and with guidance provided by DE, including that contained in the document, Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education¹.

The inspection team will record observations and evidence; this will be used as the basis for the oral and written reports after the inspection. The inspection team will want to see the pre-school centre working as normally as possible. It is not necessary to alter the educational programme for the inspection visit, or to have extra adults present. The inspection team will give most emphasis to the quality of the children's development and learning and how well these are promoted in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum set out in the Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education. They will consider a range of factors which affect the quality of the children's development and learning and make judgments on their effectiveness. These factors include:

Achievements and Standards

- the ethos of the centre;
- the children's disposition to learning; and
- the six areas of the Pre-school curriculum.

The Provision for Learning

- the quality of the staff's work with the children;
- the organisation of the curriculum;
- the provision for children with special educational needs;
- planning, assessment, recording and reporting; and

Leadership and Management

- leadership and management, including development planning and self-evaluation leading to improvement;
- arrangements for child protection/safeguarding;
- the staff and management's working relationships with parents;
- shared education (if applicable)
- staffing and staff development, including training and qualifications;
- quality of the early years specialist (EYS) support;
- links with schools, other agencies; and
- accommodation and resources.

¹ Published by CCEA for the Department of Education and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety 2006.

The inspection team will talk with the children about what they are doing as they play, and may join with them in their activities both indoors and outdoors; they may be present during story-time, music-making, or any other activities organised by the staff. The inspection team will seek a convenient time to talk to the staff about their work but will take care not to interrupt activities when the children are present.

Evidence of development planning and any self-evaluation carried out by the staff will be considered carefully as part of the inspection. The inspection team will give due recognition where the staff have themselves identified accurately aspects of their provision which need to be improved or developed, and have made a start to addressing the issues. The staff's approach to reflecting on their work and bringing about improvement will form part of the inspection evidence.

Feedback may be given at the end of an observed session or during the final oral report back, as appropriate.

6. The following table shows the procedures used during inspection.

Notification for all types of inspection

- All pre-school centres two week's notice of the inspection.
- The centre will receive a letter providing guidance on how parents/carers and staff can complete an online questionnaire.
- Leaflets providing a summary of the inspection process for parents/carers, staff and the management group are sent out with the notification letter.
- Centres will also receive a pro-forma relating to child protection/safeguarding, the ETI Complaints Procedure, and the leaflet What Happens after an Inspection.

Before all types of inspection

- The reporting inspector makes contact with the leader by phone and confirms the inspection arrangements and answers questions. The leader is asked to confirm if a room or area can be made available within the premises for the inspection team to work.
- No written information is requested from the leader in advance of the inspection.
- The leader is reminded of the contents of the inspection information pack and is requested to provide relevant information and documents for the day/s of the inspection.
- The leader is asked to complete the child protection/safeguarding pro-forma and give to the reporting inspector.
- The centre is requested to provide, for the inspection, details of any self-evaluation carried out, including, action plans and evidence of improvement, where these are available.
- The parents and staff are requested to complete the online questionnaire prior to the inspection.

During all types of inspection

- The Inspection team will arrive at the centre 15-20 minutes before the start of the session in order to meet the staff and make any necessary arrangements.
- As the parents have had the opportunity to make their views known through the inspection questionnaires, there are no meetings with the inspection team.
- The management group will have the opportunity to contribute to the inspection process either through a short meeting with the RI, at an agreed time during the inspection*.
- The inspection team will visit the playrooms and observe all aspects of the centre's planned programme. The inspection team may talk with the children about what they are doing as they play, but will generally avoid interrupting the staff during the sessions.
- The inspection team will read the documentation provided, including the centre's evidence of self-evaluation, and take note of the responses to the questionnaires.
- At a convenient time after the children have gone home, the inspection team will speak to the teacher/leader, and where appropriate, to the staff. The inspection team may ask for additional information at this time, for example about the assessment methods or the links with parents. The inspection team will discuss any emerging issues with the leader/staff.
- In a voluntary or private pre-school centre, the Inspection team will speak to the EYS and chair or representative of the management group at an arranged time prior to the report-back.

**In a nursery unit/ reception group inspected at the same time as the primary school, there are separate arrangements for meeting with the board of governors of the school.*

The report-back is on the same day as the inspection in nursery schools and the voluntary sector

- In the afternoon, the inspectors meet to consider and agree the inspection findings; they may use a room allocated to them by the leader.
- At an agreed time in the late afternoon the inspectors report back to the nursery unit teacher/nursery principal/leader and to the management group. Timings vary if the nursery unit is part of the primary school inspection and will be agreed with the principal and reporting inspector.
- The reporting inspector outlines the inspection findings, during which time the leader and management group should feel able to seek clarification, as necessary
- The nursery unit emerging findings will be reported at the daily meetings to the RI with the representative present.
- The nature and timing of any follow-up action is outlined.
- The reporting inspector refers the leader/management to “What Happens After an Inspection.”

**The reporting inspector will also arrange to speak with the EYS/Qualified Teacher prior to the report- back meeting.*

After all types of inspection

- The report is finalised.
- The leader/school principal receives a pre-publication copy of the report, checks accuracy of factual information and returns the response pro-forma. The report is then published on the website. Where no response is received from the leader within the time specified by the Inspection Services, it will be assumed that there are no factual errors and the report will proceed to publication.
- Before the report is published, the leader and the management group will receive copies.
- The employing authority and Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) (when appropriate) will receive reports by e-mail and copies are available through the ETI website.
- After the report is published, a copy is available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk
- The leader receives a password in order for the leader and the staff to complete an Evaluation of Inspection pro-forma from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

The nature of the reports

- The full report contains a detailed evaluation of all aspects of the centre's provision. It also includes statistical information and a standard conclusion that indicates the appropriate follow-up action to be taken.
- The report includes:
 - statistical information;
 - the context of the centre;
 - a standard conclusion that indicates the appropriate follow-up action to be taken;
 - statements on the children's standards and achievements;
 - statements on the provision for learning;
 - an evaluation of the arrangements for child protection/safeguarding children;
 - evaluation of the quality of leadership and management including the centre's self-evaluation including the development plan;
 - where identified, areas for improvement;
 - an evaluation of the quality of the impact of EYS support;
 - a comment on shared education, if applicable
 - a standard conclusion that indicates the appropriate follow-up action to be taken; and
 - a comment on the responses to the inspection questionnaires.
- Where the nursery unit is inspected along with the primary school, the report is integrated within the primary school report and the pre-publication arrangements for the primary school report apply.

Response to reports after all types of inspection

Please refer to What Happens After an Inspection.

Within 10 days *of receiving the final report the management group is asked to:

- acknowledge receipt of the report; and
- confirm that the report has been distributed.

Within 30 days* of receiving the final report, as outlined at the report back, the management group is asked to:

- if appropriate*, prepare an action plan addressing the areas for improvement. This action plan will be sent to the district inspector and used as the basis for discussions during the monitoring visits; and
- the reporting inspector will confirm that the planned actions are appropriate to the improvements needed.

Follow-up action after all types of inspection

- The district inspector* will visit at intervals to monitor the progress being made by the centre in implementing the action plan.
- A follow-up inspection takes place within the period of time outlined at the report-back and in the letter from the school improvement branch, Department of Education if the setting is less than good. A short report is issued to the centre and to those who received the original report. A copy is available through the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk
- Where sufficient progress is made, the follow-up process is complete.
- Where insufficient progress is made in addressing the areas for improvement, and after further time is allowed for action, a second follow-up inspection is carried out and the report is published.
- In the case of reception where provision is evaluated as less than good, it will be followed-up and reported on during the primary school follow-up inspection, otherwise ETI will monitor progress on addressing the areas for improvement.

**In the case of a nursery unit, the reporting inspector may carry out the follow-up process.*

Unannounced inspections focusing on Pastoral Care and safeguarding may be carried out at the discretion of ETI.